

U.S. Census Bureau News

U.S. Department of Commerce • Washington, D.C. 20233

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2017, AT 10:00 A.M. EDT

Data Inquiries Economic Indicators Division, Retail Indicator Branch: (301) 763-2713

CB17-71

Media Inquiries Public Information Office: (301) 763-3030

QUARTERLY RETAIL E-COMMERCE SALES 1st QUARTER 2017

Notice of Revision: Quarterly retail e-commerce estimates were revised based on the results of the 2015 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Not adjusted estimates and corresponding adjusted estimates were revised for the fourth quarter 1999 through fourth quarter 2016.

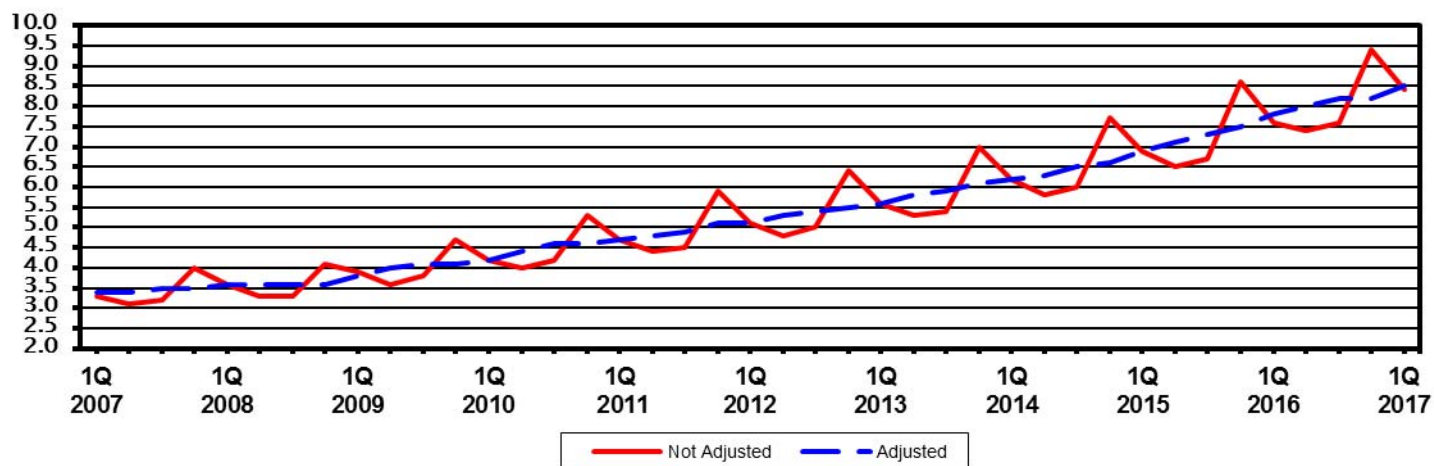
Announcement: In an effort to respond to data user needs, later this Spring the Census Bureau is releasing a new supplemental table leveraging data from the Annual Retail Trade Survey (ARTS), which will provide information on Total and E-commerce Sales by Primary Business Activity for Electronic Shopping and Mail Order Houses (NAICS 4541) for 2011-2015.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the first quarter of 2017, adjusted for seasonal variation, but not for price changes, was \$105.7 billion, an increase of 4.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the fourth quarter of 2016. Total retail sales for the first quarter of 2017 were estimated at \$1,250.0 billion, an increase of 1.0 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$) from the fourth quarter of 2016. The first quarter 2017 e-commerce estimate increased 14.7 percent ($\pm 1.9\%$) from the first quarter of 2016 while total retail sales increased 5.1 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) in the same period. E-commerce sales in the first quarter of 2017 accounted for 8.5 percent of total sales.

On a not adjusted basis, the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the first quarter of 2017 totaled \$98.1 billion, a decrease of 20.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the fourth quarter of 2016. The first quarter 2017 e-commerce estimate increased 14.8 percent ($\pm 1.9\%$) from the first quarter of 2016 while total retail sales increased 3.7 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) in the same period. E-commerce sales in the first quarter of 2017 accounted for 8.4 percent of total sales.

Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail E-commerce Sales as a Percent of Total Quarterly Retail Sales: 1st Quarter 2007 – 1st Quarter 2017

Percent of Total



The Quarterly Retail E-Commerce sales estimate for the second quarter of 2017 is scheduled for release on August 17, 2017 at 10:00 A.M. EDT.

For information, including estimates from 4th quarter 1999 forward, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/retail>. For additional information about Census Bureau e-business measurement programs and plans visit <http://www.census.gov/estats>.

* The 90% confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.

Table 1. Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales: Total and E-commerce¹

(Estimates are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey and administrative records. Unless otherwise specified, all estimates are revised based on the 2015 Annual Retail Trade Survey.)

Quarter	Retail Sales (millions of dollars)		E-commerce as a Percent of Total	Percent Change From Prior Quarter		Percent Change From Same Quarter A Year Ago	
	Total	E-commerce		Total	E-commerce	Total	E-commerce
Adjusted ²							
1st quarter 2017(p)	1,250,023	105,740	8.5	1.0	4.1	5.1	14.7
4th quarter 2016	1,237,663	101,606	8.2	1.7	1.7	3.8	14.2
3rd quarter 2016	1,216,913	99,870	8.2	0.9	3.7	2.1	15.4
2nd quarter 2016	1,205,936	96,283	8.0	1.4	4.4	2.2	15.5
1st quarter 2016	1,189,262	92,182	7.8	-0.2	3.6	2.5	14.7
Not Adjusted							
1st quarter 2017(p)	1,163,840	98,058	8.4	-10.5	-20.0	3.7	14.8
4th quarter 2016	1,299,699	122,515	9.4	6.5	32.2	3.6	14.0
3rd quarter 2016	1,220,051	92,644	7.6	-0.1	2.5	2.2	15.5
2nd quarter 2016	1,220,714	90,397	7.4	8.8	5.8	2.2	15.6
1st quarter 2016	1,122,389	85,431	7.6	-10.5	-20.5	3.5	14.6

(p) Preliminary estimate.

¹ E-commerce sales are sales of goods and services where the buyer places an order, or the price and terms of the sale are negotiated over an Internet, mobile device (M-commerce), extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other comparable online system. Payment may or may not be made online.

² Estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation, but not for price changes. Total sales estimates are also adjusted for trading-day differences and moving holidays.

Note: Table 2 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions, see http://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 2. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability for Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales Estimates: Total and E-commerce

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey.)

Quarter	Coefficient of Variation (CV)		Standard Error ¹ (SE) for E-commerce as a Percent of Total	SE for Percent Change From Prior Quarter		SE for Percent Change From Same Quarter A Year Ago	
	Total	E-commerce		Total	E-commerce	Total	E-commerce
1st quarter 2017(p)	0.6	1.7	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	1.1
4th quarter 2016(r)	0.5	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.0
3rd quarter 2016	0.5	1.7	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.4	1.1
2nd quarter 2016	0.5	1.6	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.3	1.0
1st quarter 2016	0.4	1.7	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.2	1.0

(p) Preliminary estimate. (r) Revised estimate. (Z) Estimate is less than 0.05%.

¹Standard errors may be larger than those previously published because the estimated totals used to produce the percent changes are derived from different samples.

Note: Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on data not adjusted for seasonal variation, trading-day differences, or moving holidays, and are used to make confidence statements about both adjusted and not adjusted estimates. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions, see http://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 3. Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales (Adjusted¹): Total and E-commerce²

(Estimates are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey and administrative records. Unless otherwise specified, all estimates are revised based on the 2015 Annual Retail Trade Survey.)

Quarter	Retail Sales (millions of dollars)		E-commerce as a Percent of Total	Percent Change From Prior Quarter		Percent Change From Same Quarter A Year Ago	
	Total	E-commerce		Total	E-commerce	Total	E-commerce
1st quarter 2017(p)	1,250,023	105,740	8.5	1.0	4.1	5.1	14.7
4th quarter 2016	1,237,663	101,606	8.2	1.7	1.7	3.8	14.2
3rd quarter 2016	1,216,913	99,870	8.2	0.9	3.7	2.1	15.4
2nd quarter 2016	1,205,936	96,283	8.0	1.4	4.4	2.2	15.5
1st quarter 2016	1,189,262	92,182	7.8	-0.2	3.6	2.5	14.7
4th quarter 2015	1,192,078	88,968	7.5	0.0	2.8	1.7	14.4
3rd quarter 2015	1,191,536	86,569	7.3	1.0	3.8	2.0	14.1
2nd quarter 2015	1,179,653	83,370	7.1	1.6	3.8	1.6	13.5
1st quarter 2015	1,160,693	80,344	6.9	-1.0	3.3	2.4	14.0
4th quarter 2014	1,172,007	77,755	6.6	0.3	2.5	4.2	14.0
3rd quarter 2014	1,168,593	75,883	6.5	0.7	3.3	4.5	15.3
2nd quarter 2014	1,160,673	73,480	6.3	2.4	4.2	4.7	14.9
1st quarter 2014	1,133,491	70,492	6.2	0.8	3.4	2.3	13.7
4th quarter 2013	1,124,565	68,179	6.1	0.6	3.6	3.2	12.8
3rd quarter 2013	1,117,793	65,804	5.9	0.9	2.9	4.1	13.1
2nd quarter 2013	1,108,338	63,949	5.8	0.1	3.1	4.1	14.1
1st quarter 2013	1,107,777	62,025	5.6	1.7	2.6	3.7	13.0
4th quarter 2012	1,089,625	60,439	5.5	1.5	3.9	4.0	14.1
3rd quarter 2012	1,073,438	58,157	5.4	0.8	3.7	4.3	16.3
2nd quarter 2012	1,064,966	56,067	5.3	-0.3	2.1	4.3	15.1
1st quarter 2012	1,068,607	54,896	5.1	2.0	3.6	6.3	17.0
4th quarter 2011	1,047,272	52,984	5.1	1.8	6.0	6.7	17.6
3rd quarter 2011	1,028,864	49,985	4.9	0.8	2.6	8.0	14.9
2nd quarter 2011	1,021,096	48,696	4.8	1.6	3.8	7.6	17.9
1st quarter 2011	1,004,961	46,908	4.7	2.4	4.1	7.7	19.4
4th quarter 2010	981,545	45,064	4.6	3.1	3.6	6.8	18.3
3rd quarter 2010	952,428	43,507	4.6	0.4	5.3	4.4	16.4
2nd quarter 2010	949,018	41,308	4.4	1.7	5.1	6.4	17.1
1st quarter 2010	933,469	39,291	4.2	1.5	3.1	5.0	15.1
4th quarter 2009	919,395	38,106	4.1	0.8	1.9	1.0	15.3
3rd quarter 2009	912,479	37,391	4.1	2.3	6.0	-8.6	3.1
2nd quarter 2009	891,993	35,279	4.0	0.3	3.3	-11.8	-3.4
1st quarter 2009	889,045	34,145	3.8	-2.4	3.3	-11.7	-5.2
4th quarter 2008	910,527	33,045	3.6	-8.8	-8.9	-10.3	-7.7
3rd quarter 2008	998,437	36,282	3.6	-1.3	-0.6	-0.3	4.2
2nd quarter 2008	1,011,353	36,513	3.6	0.4	1.4	1.7	9.0

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary

¹ Estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation, but not for price changes. Total sales estimates are also adjusted for trading-day differences and moving holidays.

² E-commerce sales are sales of goods and services where an order is placed by the buyer or price and terms of sale are negotiated over an Internet, extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other online system. Payment may or may not be made online.

Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions, see http://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 4. Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales (Not Adjusted): Total and E-commerce¹

(Estimates are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey and administrative records. Unless otherwise specified, all estimates are revised based on the 2015 Annual Retail Trade Survey.)

Quarter	Retail Sales (millions of dollars)		E-commerce as a Percent of Total	Percent Change From Prior Quarter		Percent Change From Same Quarter A Year Ago	
	Total	E-commerce		Total	E-commerce	Total	E-commerce
1st quarter 2017(p)	1,163,840	98,058	8.4	-10.5	-20.0	3.7	14.8
4th quarter 2016	1,299,699	122,515	9.4	6.5	32.2	3.6	14.0
3rd quarter 2016	1,220,051	92,644	7.6	-0.1	2.5	2.2	15.5
2nd quarter 2016	1,220,714	90,397	7.4	8.8	5.8	2.2	15.6
1st quarter 2016	1,122,389	85,431	7.6	-10.5	-20.5	3.5	14.6
4th quarter 2015	1,254,530	107,433	8.6	5.1	34.0	1.9	14.1
3rd quarter 2015	1,193,669	80,198	6.7	-0.1	2.5	2.0	14.3
2nd quarter 2015	1,194,448	78,212	6.5	10.1	4.9	1.5	13.7
1st quarter 2015	1,084,780	74,572	6.9	-11.9	-20.8	2.2	13.7
4th quarter 2014	1,230,611	94,167	7.7	5.2	34.3	4.4	13.9
3rd quarter 2014	1,170,221	70,139	6.0	-0.6	2.0	4.7	15.6
2nd quarter 2014	1,177,298	68,762	5.8	10.9	4.8	4.9	15.2
1st quarter 2014	1,061,310	65,614	6.2	-9.9	-20.6	2.0	13.2
4th quarter 2013	1,178,337	82,659	7.0	5.4	36.3	3.3	12.7
3rd quarter 2013	1,117,728	60,653	5.4	-0.4	1.6	4.8	13.4
2nd quarter 2013	1,121,963	59,686	5.3	7.8	3.0	4.0	14.3
1st quarter 2013	1,040,422	57,952	5.6	-8.8	-21.0	2.4	12.6
4th quarter 2012	1,141,081	73,312	6.4	6.9	37.1	4.0	14.2
3rd quarter 2012	1,067,024	53,467	5.0	-1.1	2.4	3.9	16.2
2nd quarter 2012	1,078,487	52,220	4.8	6.2	1.4	4.2	15.3
1st quarter 2012	1,015,637	51,475	5.1	-7.4	-19.9	7.6	16.6
4th quarter 2011	1,097,172	64,224	5.9	6.8	39.6	6.5	18.2
3rd quarter 2011	1,027,251	46,001	4.5	-0.7	1.6	8.0	14.8
2nd quarter 2011	1,034,750	45,298	4.4	9.6	2.6	7.7	17.7
1st quarter 2011	943,779	44,150	4.7	-8.4	-18.7	7.7	19.2
4th quarter 2010	1,030,175	54,324	5.3	8.3	35.5	6.6	18.6
3rd quarter 2010	950,860	40,077	4.2	-1.1	4.2	4.3	16.2
2nd quarter 2010	960,992	38,473	4.0	9.7	3.8	6.1	16.9
1st quarter 2010	876,021	37,047	4.2	-9.4	-19.1	5.7	14.8
4th quarter 2009	966,768	45,808	4.7	6.1	32.8	1.0	15.7
3rd quarter 2009	911,464	34,492	3.8	0.7	4.8	-8.8	3.0
2nd quarter 2009	905,562	32,924	3.6	9.3	2.0	-11.9	-3.9
1st quarter 2009	828,677	32,283	3.9	-13.4	-18.4	-12.8	-5.8
4th quarter 2008	957,207	39,580	4.1	-4.3	18.2	-9.7	-6.1
3rd quarter 2008	999,824	33,484	3.3	-2.7	-2.3	0.0	3.5
2nd quarter 2008	1,028,016	34,260	3.3	8.2	0.0	1.4	8.5

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary

¹ E-commerce sales are sales of goods and services where an order is placed by the buyer or price and terms of sale are negotiated over an Internet, extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other online system. Payment may or may not be made online.

Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions, see http://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Survey Description

Retail e-commerce sales are estimated from the same sample used for the Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) to estimate preliminary and final U.S. retail sales. Advance U.S. retail sales are estimated from a subsample of the MRTS sample that is not of adequate size to measure changes in retail e-commerce sales.

A stratified simple random sampling method is used to select approximately 10,000 retail firms excluding food services whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over two million retail firms. The MRTS sample is probability based and represents all employer firms engaged in retail activities as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Coverage includes all retailers whether or not they are engaged in e-commerce. Online travel services, financial brokers and dealers, and ticket sales agencies are **not** classified as retail and are **not** included in either the total retail or retail e-commerce sales estimates. Nonemployers are represented in the estimates through benchmarking to prior annual survey estimates that include nonemployer sales based on administrative records. E-commerce sales are included in the total monthly sales estimates.

The MRTS sample is updated on an ongoing basis to account for new retail employer businesses (including those selling via the Internet), business deaths, and other changes to the retail business universe. Firms are asked each month to report e-commerce sales separately. For each month of the quarter, data for nonresponding sampling units are imputed from responding sampling units falling within the same kind of business and sales size category or based on historical performance of that company. Responding firms account for approximately 72 percent of the e-commerce sales estimate and about 71 percent of the estimate of U.S. retail sales for any quarter.

For each month of the quarter, estimates are obtained by summing weighted sales (either reported or imputed). The monthly estimates are benchmarked to prior annual survey estimates. Estimates for the quarter are obtained by summing the monthly benchmarked estimates. The estimate for the most recent quarter is a preliminary estimate. Therefore, the estimate is subject to revision. Data users who create their own estimates using data from this report should cite the Census Bureau as the source of the input data only.

Adjusted Estimates

This report publishes estimates that have been adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. We used quarterly e-commerce sales estimates for 4th quarter 1999 to the current quarter as input to the X-13ARIMA-SEATS program to derive the adjusted estimates. For sales, we derived quarterly adjusted estimates by summing adjusted monthly sales estimates for each respective quarter. Seasonal adjustment of estimates is an approximation based on current and past experiences.

The X-13ARIMA-SEATS software improves upon the X-12 ARIMA seasonal adjustment software by providing enhanced diagnostics as well as incorporating an enhanced version of the Bank of Spain's SEATS (Signal Extraction in ARIMA Time Series) software, which uses an ARIMA model-based procedure instead of the X-11 filter-based approach to estimate seasonal factors. The X-13ARIMA-SEATS and X-12 ARIMA software produce identical results when using X-13ARIMA-SEATS with the X-11 filter-based adjustments. The X-13ARIMA-SEATS software and additional information on the X-13ARIMA-SEATS program may be found at <http://www.census.gov/srd/www/x13as/>.

Note that the retail estimates continue to be adjusted using the X-11 filter-based adjustment procedure.

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the population conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire population is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors and coefficients of variation, as given in Table 2 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimated percent change is -11.4% and its estimated standard error is 1.2%, then the margin of error is $\pm 1.753 \times 1.2\%$ or 2.1%, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -13.5% to -9.3%. Confidence intervals are computed based on the particular sample selected and canvassed. If one repeats the process of drawing all possible samples and forming all corresponding confidence intervals, approximately 90 percent of these individual confidence intervals would contain the estimate computed from a complete enumeration of all units on the sampling frame. If the confidence interval contains 0%, then one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the change is different from zero.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses with e-commerce sales, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize the effects of nonsampling error.